

# Your guide to Type 2 Diabetes

Patient Information Leaflet

## DIABETES IS A COMMON HEALTH CONDITION

About 3.6 million people in the UK are known to have diabetes - although this figure is rising steadily each year. About 9 out of 10 people with diabetes have Type 2 diabetes. Although the condition can occur at any age, it is rare in infants and becomes more common as people get older.

## TYPE 2 DIABETES

Type 2 diabetes is more common in people over the age of 40 and especially in elderly people over the age of 65. However, the incidence of Type 2 diabetes is now increasing in younger age groups such as the under 40's and occasionally, in children.

### **Risk factors include:**

- ❖ Being overweight
- ❖ Having a blood relative with diabetes
- ❖ Being of South Asian or African-Caribbean origin
- ❖ Having had diabetes during pregnancy (Gestational Diabetes)

A hormone called insulin usually controls the body's sugar or most properly, blood glucose levels. Insulin is made in a gland close to the stomach called the pancreas and is used to transfer the glucose from the blood stream to the cells of the body. If there is not enough insulin the glucose builds up in the blood stream.

People with Type 2 diabetes can still produce insulin but they are not making enough to meet the body's needs, or the insulin they do produce is not being used properly, known as insulin resistance.

People with untreated diabetes may also lose weight because fat tissue and protein (mainly from muscle) are broken down as an alternative energy source.

## SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

The main symptoms of diabetes are:

- ❖ Increased thirst
- ❖ Going to the toilet to urinate more regularly - especially at night
- ❖ Increasing tiredness
- ❖ Weight loss
- ❖ Prone to recurring infections, abscesses etc.
- ❖ Genital itching or regular episodes of thrush
- ❖ Blurred vision

Type 2 diabetes develops slowly and the symptoms are usually less severe. Some people may not notice any symptoms at all and their diabetes is only picked up in a routine medical check up. Some people may put the symptoms down to getting older or overwork.

## TREATMENT OF DIABETES

Although diabetes cannot be cured, it can be treated very successfully.

Knowing why people with diabetes develop high blood glucose levels will help you to understand how some of the treatments work.

Glucose comes from the digestion of sugary or starchy foods (carbohydrates). If someone has untreated diabetes they have higher levels of glucose circulating in their blood stream that isn't used by cells or turned into energy. This is why people with untreated diabetes often feel tired. The unused glucose passes into the urine, pulling water with it. This is why people with untreated diabetes, pass large amounts of urine and are extremely thirsty.

## HOW IS TYPE 2 DIABETES TREATED?

- ❖ A healthy diet - low in sugar, low in fat and high in fibre
- ❖ Maintaining a healthy weight
- ❖ Regular exercise
- ❖ Good blood pressure control
- ❖ Tablets/ injections - they are not a substitute for healthy eating
- ❖ Insulin - often necessary in some people when tablets are not sufficient.

If not properly controlled, Type 2 Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications. These may affect the eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart and major blood vessels.

## DIABETES AND TABLETS

There are several different types of tablet, which work in different ways:

### Sulphonylureas - Glipizide, Gliclazide

- ❖ They encourage the body to produce more insulin in the pancreas
- ❖ They should be taken 30 minutes before food
- ❖ They can cause hypoglycaemia - low blood glucose

### Biguanides - Metformin

- ❖ Usually the first choice for people especially if they are overweight
- ❖ It helps the insulin you already have work more efficiently
- ❖ It rarely causes hypoglycaemia – low blood glucose (usually associated with long periods without food)
- ❖ It must be taken with food as it can cause stomach upset or diarrhoea

### SGLT2 inhibitors - Dapagliflozin/ Empagliflozin/Canagliflozin

- ❖ Reduces the amount of glucose being reabsorbed by the kidneys so it is passed out in the urine
- ❖ Reduces the amount of glucose in the blood

## Thiazolidinedones - Pioglitazone

- ❖ They help the body use the insulin more efficiently and help to preserve the insulin-producing cells
- ❖ Usually used in combination with Metformin
- ❖ Not suitable for some patients with heart failure or liver problems

## Gliptins – Sitagliptin, Saxagliptin, Linagliptin and Alogliptin

- ❖ They regulate the levels of insulin therapy and hormones within your body that help to balance your blood glucose level
- ❖ Always in combination with another drug; less likely to cause hypoglycaemia or weight gain

## Alpha-Glucosidase Inhibitors – Acarbose (RARLEY USED)

- ❖ This slows down the digestion of food and glucose absorption
- ❖ It must be taken with the first mouthful of food as it can cause stomach upset, wind or diarrhoea

## Prandial Glucose Regulators - Repaglinide, Nateglinide (rarely used)

- ❖ Helps the body make more insulin from the pancreas after a meal
- ❖ Taken before food

## DIABETES AND INJECTABLE MEDICATIONS

- ❖ **GLP-1** is a drug used to regulate the levels of insulin therapy and hormones within your body that help to balance your blood glucose level. This drug is given once or twice a day or once weekly by injection.
- ❖ **Insulin** - if your body has stopped producing enough insulin for the tablets to work, you may require insulin. This is given by injections. Your diabetes specialist nurse will give you the necessary information and support.

## DIABETES AND COMBINATION THERAPY

Some patients take a combination of different tablets, tablets and GLP-1 injections or tablets and insulin therapy to control their blood glucose levels. The need for changes in treatment can alter over time and therefore it is important to attend regular check-ups for your diabetes either with your diabetes team or your GP.

## GENERAL ADVICE

- ❖ Take your medications as instructed
- ❖ Do not stop your medications unless instructed by your diabetes team or GP
- ❖ Do not double your dose if you miss a tablet or injection
- ❖ Speak to your doctor or diabetes nurse about whether to continue your medications if you are unwell and especially if you are not eating.
- ❖ Ensure you have a continued supply of medication

Ask your GP for a prescription exemption request form if you require tablets. If you suffer side-effects from the tablets contact your GP.

Other medications such as steroids and some diuretics (water tablets) can cause higher blood glucose levels. Your diabetes treatment may need to be altered in this case.

You need to inform the DVLA if you are on insulin for your diabetes (see leaflet Diabetes and Driving available from your healthcare team or on the [\*\*Diabetes MCN website\*\*](#).) Everyone with diabetes is legally obliged to inform their insurance company that they have diabetes. Otherwise your policy may not be valid.

## HOW DO I CONTROL MY DIABETES AND STAY AS HEALTHY AS POSSIBLE?

- ❖ Attend all your appointments where you will receive help and advice as well as screening for any complications which can be treated promptly
- ❖ Self-monitor - monitoring blood glucose is appropriate for some individuals, discuss this with your diabetes healthcare team.
- ❖ Take any medication as directed.
- ❖ Eat a healthy diet and try to maintain a healthy weight
- ❖ Exercise regularly. Keep active as this helps to control your diabetes and has other general health benefits
- ❖ Do not smoke. Smoking significantly increases the risk of complications of diabetes especially heart disease
- ❖ Keep to sensible amounts of alcohol.
- ❖ Have your eyes screened yearly and inspect your feet daily.
- ❖ Blood pressure control is very important for people with diabetes - you may require medication to control this.

## COMMON MYTHS

Some people wrongly describe Type 2 diabetes as 'mild' diabetes. There is no such thing as mild diabetes. All diabetes should be taken seriously and treated properly.

## OTHER INFORMATION

A wide range of patient information is available on the Lanarkshire Diabetes website - [Diabetes MCN website](#) - or from your diabetes healthcare team.

## DIABETES UK

Diabetes UK can provide information and advice on all aspects of diabetes. Contact the Diabetes UK Scotland Careline on Tel 0845 120 2960 or at <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/> or email [carelinescotland@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:carelinescotland@diabetes.org.uk).

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For further information go to:  
**[Diabetes MCN website](#)**

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